

County Antrim Yacht Club

Traveller Weekend 8th/9th April 2017

The start of the ITCA (IRL) spring/summer program kicked off last weekend with a pre-event race coaching day organised and run by the RYA (NI) as part of their Open Pathway series. The aim of the course is to try to encourage new sailors into the class and, at the same time, attract the more seasoned sailor wishing to sharpen up their techniques prior to race day. A total of 26 sailors signed up for the days coaching and it was a great mix of experienced Topper racers and some new faces. Many of the sailors (and their parents) had not seen each other since the end of the 2016 season so there was a great buzz about the dinghy park as some caught up and new comers were welcomed into the Topper 'family'.

Head coach for the day was Chris Penny who was ably assisted by Mary Martin, Jocelyn Hill and Luke McIlwaine.

The morning's brief mainly focused on mark rounding and wave technique. Mention was also made of the strong tides that run in the race area. After an energetic on-land warm up, team work was called upon to launch the RIBS for the day. Working together the sailors had the three RIBS launched in no time.

As the sailors took to the water in winds which were steadily increasing, it was evident that they were going to get a great opportunity to test out their wave technique. One report from ITCA (IRL) Chairman, Alistair, aboard the Stena Super Fast indicated winds in excess of 20 Knts. At lunch time one sailor commented that the waves were 'just horrible'! None the less, the sailors seemed to relish testing themselves in these great conditions and all came off the water at the end of the day with smiles on their faces.

At the debrief Chris showed videos that he had taken on the water, and advised on some dos and don'ts. All in all a very successful day on and off the water.

Thank you to Chris, Mary, Jocelyn and Luke for making it a thoroughly enjoyable day for all involved.

Sunday morning and sailors arrived to what looked like a perfect postcard scene along the Whitehead Promenade. Glorious sunshine and a flat calm sea! With the predicted wind noticeably missing, murmurs of 'I hope the wind fills in' were heard around the boat park.

Numbers were looking good for the first traveller of the series, with 45 boats registering in total and we were delighted to see that such a good number of 4.2 sailors (12) were amongst that number. Thank you to CAYCs lovely registration team for their warm welcome to all competitors.

This year the ITCA (IRL) have decided to change the format of the Traveller a little and have introduced a fourth race to the day's racing in order to allow a discard should the 4 races take place. Race officer Sheela Lewis faced the daunting task of being the first RO to attempt this so her and her race committee were keen to get everyone on to the water and get started on time.

As the sailors launched, the breeze, though light, remained steady. Marks were promptly laid and racing was soon underway. Due to an issue with a mark, the RO had to make the tough call to abandon the first race and reset. However, all was not lost as this gave time for the wind to freshen a little which made for improved racing conditions.

All went smoothly from there on in, with winds steadily increasing throughout the afternoon's racing. Full credit has to go to Sheela and her team for managing to get all 4 races completed.

Racing was tight at the top, First race honours went to Jenna McCarlie, second race went to Dan McGaughey, third to Jenna and Fourth to Dan. Both competitors tied on 4 points at the end of the day with Dan claiming the title on countback. The story was exactly the same in the 4.2 fleet. First race honours went to Lewis Thompson, second and third to Hannah Dadley-Young and fourth to Lewis. Again the two sailors were tied on 4 points with Lewis winning on countback.

Final results in the 5.3 fleet: 1st Dan McGaughey (DSC/BYC), 2nd Jenna McCarlie (CAYC), 3rd Sarah Jennings (EDYC).

4.2 fleet: 1st Lewis Thompson (DSC/BYC), 2nd Hannah Dadley-Young (BYC), 3rd Josh McGregor (DSC/BYC).

Overall winners were presented with beautiful bespoke trophies, handmade by event organiser Ben Ferris.

Well done to all of our age category winners too. Full results will be posted on the website over the next few days.

Thank you and congratulations to County Antrim Yacht Club and especially event organiser Ben Ferris for organising such a great opening traveller event and for extending such a warm welcome to all sailors and parents.

Good luck to all of our sailors as they look towards the next event in the Topper calendar. The ISA Youth Pathway Nationals will take place at Ballyholme Yacht Club from the 20th to 23rd April.

Nicola Williamson